https://militaryhistorynow.com/2017/07/06/faces-of-war-meet-the-extraordinary-people-in-10-of-ww2s-most-famous-images/

Hands Across the Elbe

(Image source: WikiCommons)

East met West in this famous snapshot taken as U.S. and Soviet forces linked up at Torgau on the River Elbe on April 25, 1945. Second from the left in the photo is Bernard E. Kirschenbaum* , a New York native who would go on to become an acclaimed sculptor and architect. He died in 2016 at the age of 91. Among the Soviet contingent is Chaim "Charley" Thau (fourth from the right), a 23-year-old anti-tank battery commander with the Soviet 58th Guards Division. Thau was born in Zablotow, Poland but fled his homeland in 1939 after the German invasion. He later joined the Red Army. After the war, Thau returned home only to discover that his family and friends had been killed during the Nazi occupation. He defected to the west in 1946 and eventually settled in Milwaukee where he ran a gas station for much of his life. He died in 1995 at the age of 73.

** **NOTE:** For decades, a GI named Delbert "Del" Philpott of Omro, Wisconsin claimed to be the figure second from the left in the Elbe photo. The 21-year-old soldier, who was serving with the U.S. Army's 69th Infantry Division at the time, would study chemistry after the war and would eventually work on NASA's lunar missions. Despite editing a book on the events at Torgau entitled* Hands Across The Elbe, *recent research has revealed that Bernard E. Kirschenbaum is really the individual appearing in the image, although many sources continue to claim Philpott is shown. Special thanks to Jeff Thau, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel who just happens to be the son of Chaim Thau for digging into the story.*